NEW YORK TIMES
JUN 1971
STATINTL

KEY TEXTS FR
PENTAGON'S VIETNA

Following are texts of key documents accompanying the Pentagon's study of the Vietnam war, covering the opening of the sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam in the first half of 1965. Except where excerpting is indicated, the documents are printed verbatim, with only unmistakable typographical errors corrected.

Letter From Rostow Favoring Commitment of Troops by U.S.

Personal letter from Walt W. Rostow, chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, to Secretary McNamara, Nov. 16, 1964, "Military Dispositions and Political Signals."

Following on our conversation of last night I am concerned that too much thought is being given to the actual damage we do in the North, not enough thought to the signal we wish to send.

The signal consists of three parts:

a) damage to the North is now to be inflicted because they are violating the 1954 and 1962 accords;

b) we are ready and able to go much further than our initial act of damage;

c) we are ready and able to meet any level of escalation they might mount in response, if they are so minded.

Four points follow.

1. I am convinced that we should not go forward into the next stage without a US ground force commitment of some kind:

a. The withdrawal of those ground forces could be a critically important part of our diplomatic bargaining position. Ground forces can sit during a conference more easily than we can maintain a series of mounting air and naval pressures.

b. We must make clear that counter escalation by the Communists will run directly into US strength on the ground; and, therefore the possibility of radically extending their position on the ground at the cost of air and naval damage alone, is ruled out.

c. There is a marginal possibility that in attacking the airfield they were thinking two moves ahead; namely, they might be planning a pre-emptive ground force response to an expected US retaliation for the Bien Hoa attack.

2. The first critical military action against North Vietnam should be designed merely to install the principle that they will, from the present forward, be vulnerable to retaliatory attack in the north for continuing violation of the 1954 and 1962 Accords. In other words, we would signal a shift from the principle involved in the Tonkin Gulf response. This means that the initial use of force in the north should be as limited and as unsanguinary as possible. It is the installation of the principle that we are initially interested in, not tit for tat.

3. But our force dispositions to accompany an initial retaliatory move against the north should send three further signals lucidly:

a. that we are putting in place a capacity subsequently to step up direct and naval pressure on the north, if that should be required;

b. that we are prepared to face down any form of escalation North Vietnam might mount on the ground; and

c. that we are putting forces into place to exact retaliation directly against Communist China, if Peiping should join in an escalatory response from Hanoi. The latter could take the form of increased aircraft on Formosa plus, perhaps, a carrier force sitting off China distinguished from the force in the South China Sea.

4. The launching of this track, almost certainly, will require the President to explain to our own people and to the world our intentions and objectives. This will also be perhaps the most persuasive form of communication with Ho and Mao. In addition, I am inclined to think the most direct communication we can mount (perhaps via Vientiane and Warsaw) is desirable, as opposed to the use of cut-outs. They should feel they now confront an LBJ who has made up his mind. Contrary to an anxiety expressed at an earlier stage, I believe it quite possible to communicate the limits as well as the seriousness of our intentions without raising seriously the fear in Hanoi that we intend at our initiative [illegible] Delta, in China, or seek any other objective than the re-installation of the 1954 and 1962 Accords.

Mem... Advo... and ...

Mem...

Nov. 23, 1... to the Crui...

I leave ... CIAP and ... In early D... on Southe... therefore, ... observatio... ready con...

1. We ... minds as ... appreciation of the view in Hanoi and Peiping of the Southeast Asia problem. I agree almost completely with SNIE 10-3-64 of October 9. Here are the critical passages:

"While they will seek to exploit and encourage the deteriorating situation in Saigon, they probably will avoid actions that would in their view unduly increase the chances of a major US response against North Vietnam (DRV) or Communist China. We are almost certain that both Hanoi and Peiping are anxious not to become involved in the kind of war in which the great weight of superior US weaponry could be brought against them. Even if Hanoi and Peiping estimated that the US would not use nuclear weapons against them, they could not be sure of this. . . .

"In the face of new US pressures against the DRV, further actions by Hanoi and Peiping would be based to a considerable extent on their estimate of US intentions, i.e., whether the US was actually determined to increase its pressures as necessary. Their estimates on this point are probably uncertain, but we believe that fear of provoking severe measures by the US would lead them to temper their responses with a good deal of caution. . . .

"If despite Communist efforts, the US attacks continued, Hanoi's leaders would have to ask themselves whether it was not better to suspend their support of Viet Cong military action rather than suffer the destruction of their major military facilities and the industrial sector of their economy. In the belief that the DRV has [illegible] their favor in South Vietnam, they might

NEW-YORK TIMES

KEY TEXTS FR
PENTAGON'S VIETNA

Following are texts of key documents from the Pentagon's history of the Vietnam war, covering events of August, 1964, to February, 1965, the period in which the bombing of North Vietnam was planned. Except where excerpting is specified, the documents are printed verbatim, with only unmistakable typographical errors corrected.

Rusk Cable to Embassy in Laos On Search and Rescue Flights

Cablegram from Secretary of State Dean Rusk to the United States Embassy in Vientiane, Laos, Aug. 26, 1964. A copy of this message was sent to the Commander in Chief, Pacific.

We agree with your assessment of importance SAR operations that Air America pilots can play critically important role, and SAR efforts should not discriminate between rescuing Americans, Thais and Lao. You are also hereby granted as requested discretionary authority to use AA pilots in T-28's for SAR operations when you consider this indispensable rpt indispensable to success of operation and with understanding that you will seek advance Washington authorization wherever situation permits.

At same time, we believe time has come to review scope and control arrangements for T-28 operations extending into future. Such a review is especially indicated view fact that these operations more or less automatically impose demands for use of US personnel in SAR operations. Moreover, increased AA capability clearly means possibilities of loss somewhat increased, and each loss with accompanying SAR operations involves chance of escalation from one action to another in ways that may not be desirable in wider picture. On other side, we naturally recognize T-28 operations are vital both for their military and psychological effects in Laos and as negotiating card in support of Souvanna's position. Request your view whether balance of above factors would call for some reduction in scale of operations and-or dropping of some of better-defended targets. (Possible extension T-28 operations to Panhandle would be separate issue and will be covered by septel.)

On central problem our understanding is that Thai pilots fly missions strictly controlled by your Air Command Center with [word illegible] in effective control, but that this not true of Lao pilots. We have impression latter not really under any kind of firm control.

Request your evaluation and recommendations as to future scope T-28 operations and your comments as to whether our impressions present control structure correct and whether steps could be taken to tighten this.

Rusk Query to Vientiane Embassy On Desirability of Laos Cease-Fire

Cablegram from Secretary of State Rusk to the United States Embassy in Laos, Aug. 7, 1964. Copies were also sent, with a request for comment, to the American missions in London, Paris, Saigon, Bangkok, Ottawa, New Delhi, Moscow, Pnompenh and Hong Kong, and to the Pacific command and the mission at the United Nations.

1. As pointed out in your 219, our objective in Laos is to stabilize the situation again, if possible within framework of the 1962 Geneva settlement. Essential to stabilization would be establishment of military equilibrium in the country. Moreover, we have some concern that recent RLG successes and reported low PL morale may lead to some escalation from Communist side, which we do not now wish to have to deal with.

2. Until now, Souvanna's and our position has been that military equilibrium would require Pathet Lao withdrawal from areas seized in PDJ since May 15 and that such precondition ference. Que ritorial gains vided they c practice bro equilibrium no longer n Lao withdra tion to 14-n fact though curred to So is also touc to Butler (Souvanna a PDJ withdr evitably ins gains, and arrangemen present fa division. I were to be best be don it might be used by Souvanna as bargaining counter in obtaining satisfaction on his other condition that he attend conference as head of Laotian Government. Remaining condition would be cease-fire. While under present conditions cease-fire might not be of net advantage to Souvanna—we are thinking primarily of T-28 operations—Pathet Lao would no doubt insist on it. If so, Souvanna could press for effective ICC policing of cease-fire. Latter could be of importance in upcoming period.

3. Above is written with thought in mind that Polish proposals [one word illegible] effectively collapsed and that pressures continue for Geneva [word illegible] conference and will no doubt be intensified by current crisis brought on by DRV naval attacks. Conference on Laos might be useful safety valve for these generalized pressures while at same time providing some deterrent to escalation of hostilities on that part of the "front." We would insist that conference be limited to Laos and believe that it could in fact be so limited, if necessary by our withdrawing from the conference room if any other subject brought up, as we did in 1961-62. Side discussions on other topics could not be avoided but we see no great difficulty with this; venue for informal corridor discussion with PL, DRV, and Chicoms could be valuable at this juncture.

4. In considering this course of action, key initial question is of course whether Souvanna himself is prepared to drop his withdrawal precondition and whether, if he did, he could maintain himself in power in Vientiane. We gather that answer to first question is probably yes but we are much more dubious about

Continued

NEW YORK TIMES
13 JUN 1971 STATINTL

19

KEY TEXTS FRO[redacted] PENTAGON'S VIET[redacted] STUDY

Following are the texts of key [redacted] the Pentagon's study of the Vietna[redacted] December, 1963, through the Tonkin [redacted] 1964, and its aftermath. Except wher[redacted] the documents are printed verbatim, [redacted] typographical errors corrected.

McNamara Report to Johnson On the Situation in Saigon in '63

Memorandum, "Vietnam Situation," from Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara to President Lyndon B. Johnson, Dec. 21, 1963.

In accordance with your request this morning, this is a summary of my conclusions after my visit to Vietnam on December 19-20.

1. Summary. The situation is very disturbing. Current trends, unless reversed in the next 2-3 months, will lead to neutralization at best and more likely to a Communist-controlled state.

2. The new government is the greatest source of concern. It is indecisive and drifting. Although Minh states that he, rather than the Committee of Generals, is making decisions, it is not clear that this is actually so. In any event, neither he nor the Committee are experienced in political administration and so far they show little talent for it. There is no clear concept on how to re-shape or conduct the strategic hamlet program; the Province Chiefs, most of whom are new and inexperienced, are receiving little or no direction because the generals are so preoccupied with essentially political affairs. A specific example of the present situation is that General [name illegible] is spending little or no time commanding III Corps, which is in the vital zone around Saigon and needs full-time direction. I made these points as strongly as possible to Minh, Don, Kim, and Tho.

3. The Country Team is the second major weakness. It lacks leadership, has been poorly informed, and is not working to a common plan. A recent example of confusion has been conflicting USOM and military recommendations both to the Government of Vietnam and to Washington on the size of the military budget. Above all, Lodge has virtually no official contact with Harkins. Lodge sends in reports with major military implications without showing them to Harkins, and does not show Harkins important incoming traffic. My impression is that Lodge simply does not know how to conduct a coordinated administration. This has of course been stressed to him both by [illegible] and myself (and also by John McCone), and I do not think he is consciously rejecting our advice; he has just operated as a loner all his life and cannot readily change now.

Lodge's newly-designated deputy, David Nes, was with us and seems a highly competent team player. I have stated the situation frankly to him and he has said he would do all he could to constitute what would in effect be an executive committee operating below the level of the Ambassador.

As to the grave reporting weakness, both Defense and CIA must take major steps to improve this. John McCone and I have discussed it and are acting vigorously in our respective spheres.

4. Viet Cong progress has been great during the period since the coup, with my best guess being that the situation has in fact been deteriorating in the countryside since July to a far greater extent than we realized because of our undue dependence on distorted Vietnamese reporting. The Viet Cong now control very high proportions of the people in certain key provinces, particularly those directly south and west of Saigon. The Strategic Hamlet Program was seriously over-extended in those provinces, and the Viet Cong has been able to destroy many hamlets, while others have been abandoned or in some cases betrayed or pillaged by the government's own Self Defense Corps. In these key provinces, the Viet Cong have destroyed almost all major roads, and are collecting taxes at will.

As remedial measures, we must get the government to re-allocate its military forces so that its effective strength in these provinces is essentially doubled. We also need to have major increases in both military and USOM staffs, to sizes that will give us a reliable, independent U.S. appraisal of the status of operations. Thirdly, realistic pacification plans must be prepared, allocating ade- [illegible] government-controlled areas and work out from there.

This g [redacted] inantly [redacted] capital a [redacted] complish [redacted] started [redacted] situation [redacted] areas is [redacted] not seem [redacted] substantially in recent months. General Harkins still hopes these areas may be made reasonably secure by the latter half of next year.

In the gloomy southern picture, an exception to the trend of Viet Cong success may be provided by the possible adherence to the government of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects, which total three million people and control key areas along the Cambodian border. The Hoa Hao have already made some sort of agreement, and the Cao Dai are expected to do so at the end of this month. However, it is not clear that their influence will be more than neutralized by these agreements, or that they will in fact really pitch in on the government's side.

5. Infiltration of men and equipment from North Vietnam continues using (a) land corridors through Laos and Cambodia; (b) the Mekong River waterways from Cambodia; (c) some possible entry from the sea and the tip of the Delta. The best guess is that 1000-1500 Viet Cong cadres entered South Vietnam from Laos in the first nine months of 1963. The Mekong route (and also the possible sea entry) is apparently used for heavier weapons and ammunition and raw materials which have been turning up in increasing numbers in the south and of which we have captured a few shipments.

To counter this infiltration, we reviewed in Saigon various plans providing for cross-border operations into Laos. On the scale proposed, I am quite clear that these would not be politically acceptable or even militarily [illegible] mediate U-2 mapping of the whole Laos and Cambodian border, and this we are preparing on an urgent basis.

Continued

NEW YORK TIMES
6 JUN 1971

C. I. A. Identifies 21 Asian Opium

By FELIX BELAIR Jr.
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 5—United States intelligence agents have identified at least 21 opium refineries in the border area of Burma, Laos, and Thailand that provide a constant flow of heroin to American troops in South Vietnam.

Operated and protected in Burma and Thailand by insurgent armies and their leaders and in Laos by elements of the royal Laotian armed forces, the refining and distributing have grown until white heroin rated 96 per cent pure is turning up in Pacific coast cities of the United States as well as in Saigon.

The Burma-Laos-Thailand border area, known as the "Golden Triangle," normally accounts for about 700 tons of opium annually, or about half the world's illicit production. Burma is the largest producer in the region, accounting for about 400 tons.

But a recent analysis by the Central Intelligence Agency suggests that production is expanding in the area, and there are indications that this year's output may reach 1,000 tons.

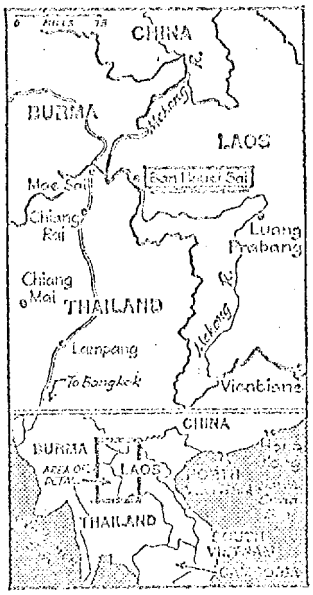
More High-Grade Heroin

The C.I.A. analysis made [illegible] major points about recent trends in the illicit narcotics business in Southeast Asia:

¶Refineries in Laos and Thailand that used to produce only refined opium, morphine base and No. 3, heroin for smoking are now converting most of their opium supplies to No. 4, or 96 per cent pure white heroin. The change "appears to be due to the sudden increase in demand by a large and relatively affluent market in South Vietnam."

¶"Most of the narcotics buyers in the tri-border area are ethnic Chinese who pool their purchases, but no large syndicate appears to be involved. The opium, morphine base and heroin purchased in this area eventually finds its way to Bangkok, Vientiane and Luang Prabang, where additional processing may take place before delivery to Saigon, Hong Kong and other international markets."

A "considerable quantity" of raw opium and morphine base from northeast Burma and Thailand was smuggled into Bangkok and sent from there to Hong Kong in fishing trawlers from Jan. 1 t[illegible]



The New York Times June 6, 1971

Opium products from the surrounding area, known as the 'Golden Triangle,' are said to be shipped through Ban Houei Sai.

[illegible] trying one to three tons of opium and quantities of morphine base, "one trawler a day moves to the vicinity of the Chinese Communist-controlled Lema Islands—15 miles from Hong Kong—where the goods are loaded into Hong Kong junks."

¶Opium and derivatives move through Laos and are transferred from the Mekong River refineries by river craft and vehicles to Ban Houei Sai, further downstream on the Mekong in Laos, and are transported from there to Luang Prabang or Vientiane. A considerable portion of the Laotian-produced narcotics is smuggled into Saigon."

¶"An increased demand for No. 4 heroin also appears to be reflected in the steady rise in the price. For example, in mid-April, 1971, the price in the Tachilek [Burma] area for a kilo of No. 4 heroin was reported to be $1,780, as compared with $1,240 in September, 1970." A kilogram is 2.2 pounds.

¶"The reported increasing incidence of heroin addiction among U.S. servicemen in Vietnam and recent intelligence indicating that heroin traffic between Southeast Asia and the United States may also be increasing suggest that Southeast Asia is growing in importance as a producer of heroin."

U.S. Policy Criticized

This growth has been aided, according to one Congressional authority, by the lack—until recently—of a firm United States policy on heroin in Southeast Asia. The United States—which provides billions of dollars in military and economic foreign aid to Laos, Thailand and Cambodia—has directed its efforts intercepting the traffic at the Saigon end of the line rather than to stamping out production at the source, Representative Robert H. Steele, Republican of Connecticut, said today.

Mr. Steele is the principal author of a recent report estimating the numbers of heroin addicts among American servicemen in South Vietnam at 25,000 to 30,000.

"Vietnam unquestionably proves that the availability of narcotics breeds users," he said. "Until we dry up the sources, we haven't got a prayer of combatting the problem."

While much of the opium producing and refining takes place in areas of Burma, Laos and Thailand now controlled by insurgents, narcotics enforcement officials say that a continuous flow of the drugs through government-controlled areas cannot be sustained without the involvement of corrupt officials.

The same view was expressed earlier in the week by John E. Ingersoll, director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, in testimony before the House Select Committee on Crime.

He said that middle-level government officials and military men throughout Southeast Asia were deeply involved in the traffic in opium, the product from which morphine and heroin is refined.

Routes and Refineries Named

The analysis by the Central Intelligence Agency pinpointed major areas of cultivation, refineries and routes used in the traffic.

Northeast Burma was identified as the largest producer and processor of raw opium in the border area. The study said that Burma's 14 refineries, located in the Tachilek area, last year converted 30 tons of raw opium into refined opium, morphine base and heroin.

"The opium harvested in Shan, Wa and Kokang area is picked by caravans that are put together by the major insurgent leaders in these areas," the C.I.A. study said. "The caravans, which can include up to 600 horses and donkeys and 300 to 400 men, take the opium on the southeasterly journey to the processing plants that lie along the Mekong River in the Tachilek-Mae Sai, Thailand-Ban Houei Sai, Laos area."

The analysis said that caravans carrying more than 16 metric tons had been reported. A metric ton is about 2,200 pounds.

7 Important Refineries

Of the 21 refineries identified in the three countries, seven were described in the report as capable of processing raw opium to the heroin stage. "The most important are located in the areas around Tachilek, Burma; Ban Houei Sai and Nam Keung in Laos, and Mae Salong in Thailand," it said.

"The best known, if not largest of these refineries is the one at Ban Houei Tap, Laos, near Ban Houei Sai, which is believed capable of processing some 100 kilos of raw opium per day," the report said.

The opium and derivatives crossing Thailand from Burma enroute to Bangkok was traced in the paper as moving out of such Northern Thai towns as Chiang Rae, Chiang Mai, Lampang and Tak "by various modes of ground and water transport."

"The opium is packed by the growers and traded to itinerant Chinese merchants who transport it to major collection points, particularly aroundLashio and Ken Tung," the study said.

Joseph Alsop

WASHINGTON POST

26 MAR 1971

On Credibility Gaps

WEEK BY WEEK, it is being increasingly said that President Nixon is suffering from a "credibility gap." This silly but fashionable phrase is meant to imply that nobody believes the President, because he does not tell the country the truth.

It would be ludicrous to deny that the President does not exercise the politician's privilege of being mealy-mouthed about some things that could be stated far more starkly. But it really is time to point out that the President has usually been decidedly forthright and accurate about great matters.

Or at least he has been rather more accurate than the people in politics, in the media, and even within the government, who go on and on about this "credibility gap." To begin with the government itself, some very strange results have been produced in these last years by bureaucratic rivalries, by ideological slants, and above all, by the desire of a good many permanent officials to follow the currently fashionable herd.

IN TANGIBLE TERMS, these results have mainly taken the form of grossly misleading estimates of problems of very great importance. The fact-gathering apparatus is not at fault. The problem lies in what is done with the facts, once they are gathered.

Thus from 1966 to 1969, it was officially estimated that the Vietcong were able to deploy no less than 300,000 guerrillas of one sort or another. A misuse of facts produced this figure.

Then more facts, too strong to ignore, caused the figure to implode, as it were. In one swift shrinkage, it was reduced to an outside total of 60,000 Vietcong guerrillas. An admitted error by a factor of five is rather considerable, one must add.

Yet it is hardly more considerable than the equally important error that was made about Cambodia's enormous logistical importance to Hanoi—which was only revealed by the President's Cambodian venture. And no [illegible] dian rain dances about these well known governmental errors, precisely because they were errors on the currently modish side!

IF YOU TURN to the politicians, you find another interesting study in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's inquiry into the American activities in Laos. The inquiry produced great "revelations" of subsidized Meo guerrillas, of Americans out of uniform who aid the Laotian people to defend their country, and of other wicked activities.

There are two things to be said about these "revelations." Sen. Stuart Symington of Missouri and of the Foreign Relations Committee has been a member of the watchdog committee of the Central Intelligence Agency for a very long time. All the facts "revealed" by his committee's inquiry had either been known to Sen. Symington, or had been very easily accessible to him, long before the so-called "revelations" began.

By the same token, all the facts of any significance were equally well known to scores of newspapermen, both in the field and here in Washington. It may have been desirable to place the facts before a larger public. But it was a perfect conspiracy of hypocrisy to pretend that the U.S. government's activities in Laos had been successfully and purposely concealed from anyone, including newspapermen.

If one must be bluntly honest about it, moreover, there is another conspiracy of hypocrisy about the record of the media in recent years, on certain very critical occasions. It has already been pointed out in this space that both the Tet offensive and the President's Cambodian venture were grossly misrepresented when these two great events were covering the front pages.

SOME OF THE chief culprits have admitted in print —but hardly on the front pages—that Tet was in fact a perfect disaster for Hanoi, instead of the precise opposite as first reported. It has been admitted, too, that the Cambodian venture has just about ended the war in the lower half of South Vietnam. But no one has boldly admitted that, in conse[illegible] President Nixon's decision at least deserve qualification.

The thing does not en[redacted] there, either. One of th[redacted] major news agencies ha[redacted] rather flatly predicted the imminent fall of Phnom Penh so often that this reporter has lost count. At least four times, these wholly erroneous predictions have again covered the front pages. But no one, so far as is known, has even murmured, "So sorry!"

As to the television coverage of the Laos campaign, if the Battle of the Bulge had been similarly covered by television, the natural tendency would have been to ask Adolf Hitler for the best terms he was willing to offer. So the question rises, just what is credibility, and who has a gap?

STATINTL

WASHINGTON POST

21 MAR 1971

Joseph Kraft

The Returns From Laos

THE JURY on Laos may not yet be in, as the President put it in his latest news conference. But out of the fog of war and censorship, some big chunks of evidence are emerging.

The most dramatic was the fall of Fire Base Lolo to Communist troops early last week. News reports from the field suggest the South Vietnamese pulled out in considerable disarray. Some reports from Saigon list heavy losses. In Washington, it is thought the enemy was able to capture intact most of the big guns brought in by the South Vietnamese.

Then there is the matter of the truck traffic south along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. In his news conference of March 4, Mr. Nixon, citing as authority the American commander, Gen. Creighton Abrams, said: "There's been a 55 per cent decrease in truck traffic south into South Vietnam, which means that those trucks that do not go south will not carry the arms and the men that will be killing Americans."

But it now appears that the 55 per cent figure covered only a brief period of extremely bad weather. Even as Mr. Nixon was speaking, the electric sensors and other measuring devices were recording a rise in truck traffic south. The Central Intelligence Agency, though it has done several reports on the subject, has apparently still not certified that the Laos operation has caused any diminution in the flow of Communist supplies.

Then there is the matter of Route 92, a main north-south traffic artery in the Ho Chi Minh Trail. At the outset of the Laotian operation, a senior official of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lt. Gen. John Vogt, gave congressional testimony that the operation would enable South Vietnamese forces to block Route 92 within a couple of weeks.

A month later only a couple of South Vietnamese battalions have advanced as far as Route 92. That is hardly a large enough force to block off a very heavily protected area.

Finally, there is the general configuration of the battle line. The South Vietnamese troops started the operation into Laos by advancing along Route 9. They first moved westward and then hooked north to Sepone.

But now much of the South Vietnamese force has been withdrawn south of Route 9. Indeed, the enemy seems to have opened a powerful salient on the other side of what started out to be the axis of the South Vietnamese drive.

NO DOUBT this evidence is far too fragmentary to be a base for conclusive judgments. Certainly there is no reason to talk of an Allied defeat—the less so as a very heavy toll has been taken of Communist troops by American and South Vietnamese firepower.

But it does seem clear that the Communists are not, as so many in the Pentagon have been saying, at the end of their strength. They have put up a strong fight, and even taken the offensive.

The indications are that the lack of Communist activity in the months before the Laotian operation was less a function of weakness than that of a deliberate decision to lie low. The returns now coming in from Laos demonstrate that any time they want to take casualties the Communists can make life very rough for the South Vietnamese forces.

What this means is that another question mark has to be put after the policy of Vietnamization. It always strained credulity to believe that South Vietnamese forces could do, minus half a million American troops, what they were unable to do *with* those troops. Now that rough judgment, based on past experience, is reinforced by present experience. It is more than ever doubtful that the South Vietnamese can defend themselves without substantial American help.

It makes little sense in these circumstances to proclaim the opposite. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird does a disservice to the President when he asserts that all is going well in Laos, and that the withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam can continue at a constant level. Indeed, it is thanks to just such helpful comments from Mr. Laird that the Nixon administration is now having to wrestle with an acute credibility problem.

The right tactic in the present circumstance is to try to give new impetus to the negotiations for a political settlement which have been allowed to lie dormant so long. The key to those negotiations has always been the prospect of change in the Saigon regime. With presidential elections due in South Vietnam this fall, that prospect is more alive than ever.

In other words, the issue required to stimulate the negotiation is at hand. And it is far better to negotiate out, assuring the safe withdrawal of American troops and the release of American prisoners, than to run the risk of a military reverse that would flush everything down the drain.

12 MAR 1971 STATINTL

Our Intelligence in Vietnam, And Doesn't Work

By STEPHEN E. AMBROSE

HOW can our intelligence be so miserably, consistently bad? Between them, the CIA and the intelligence branches of the three armed services have a budget that probably exceeds the GNP of North Vietnam. They have agents everywhere, extensive and sophisticated lines of communications to get information back to headquarters, the most modern and complex computers to sift and analyze the raw material, and the best brains in the country to read the computer feed-outs and explain the big picture. There is precious little romance in the process, as in the old days of spying, but our information gathering and evaluation techniques represent the culmination of modern American technology. We have committed our best tools and our best men, and we have failed.

It has been so from the beginning. In 1965 the Air Force informed the President that its intelligence indicated that a few weeks of bombing in North Vietnam would bring the enemy to his knees. In 1966 and 1967 Army intelligence concentrated on the infra-structure of the enemy in the villages. Isolate the Viet Cong, the formula ran, and the rebellion will dry up. Unfortunately for the Army, for every V.C. identified and eliminated, two more sprang up. During the same period Air Force intelligence indicated that the bombing campaign was destroying North Vietnam's ability to fight, while the interdiction bombing in Laos and Cambodia had made it impossible for the enemy to get supplies into South Vietnam. The CIA and the services used every index they could invent—all pointed to the collapse of the enemy. When McNamara and Rusk and Johnson told us we had turned the corner, or spoke of light at the end of the tunnel, they were not whistling in the dark. They based their optimistic predictions on absolutely complete, absolutely reliable information. The enemy had no offensive capacity left and would soon wither away.

Then came Tet. It was an intelligence disaster of an order of magnitude equaled only by Pearl Harbor and MacArthur's assurance that the Chinese would not enter the Korean war even if American troops marched to the Yalu. Tet was one of the few major, widespread ground offensives in human history to catch the defenders completely by surprise.

The American response was not to reevaluate the technique, but to step it up. We sent in or bought additional agents, created better communications, added more computers, and set up extra committees in Saigon and the Pentagon to collate everything. We built incredible devices to find out where the enemy was—devices that could, for example, take the temperature of an area and on that basis indicate whether there were human beings gathered together under the jungle cover. We flew reconnaissance missions all over Indochina, taking millions of photographs with cameras so sensitive that they could pick up the numbers on an auto license plate from 10,000 feet and more.

Armed with all this information, the intelligence people went to Nixon and said we had a great opportunity at hand. The North Vietnamese were concentrated in a few narrow areas of Cambodia. Foolishly, they had even placed their command headquarters for the entire war near the Cambodian border. COSVN, the intelligence people said it was called. We could pick off the nerve center of the entire enemy war effort in a short campaign and, if not end the war, at least buy time in which to prepare the ARVN to fight the battles. Nixon believed, and who can blame him? The best intelligence service in the world was positive.

So the President went on television to speak of Stalingrad and the Bulge and other great battles. He told the American people their sons were about to win a victory that would be just as decisive. He explained COSVN in detail and then outlined the process whereby our troops were going to surround and capture great numbers of the enemy, in an operation comparable only to the German blitzkrieg in Poland, France, and Russia.

When he next appeared on television, the President showed us movies highlighting the results of the Cambodian invasion. We had captured some rice and a few small arms. He did not mention COSVN or enemy troops. A few months later, American intelligence thought it spotted a PW camp, so we raided North Vietnam—and again came up with nothing.

Now comes Laos. Intelligence had finally figured out that the stupendous interdiction campaign against the Ho Chi Minh Trail had not worked. Still there was hope. American intelligence sources indicated that the North Vietnamese were weak, while ARVN was growing stronger. With a little American air support, ARVN could move into Laos and physically occupy the trail, thus cutting the enemy supply line completely. The results of this latest blunder are too painful to discuss.

How could it happen? The men involved in the intelligence process are not stupid, the technology they have at their disposal does work. Everyone involved in the system works long, hard hours. They know that men's lives depend on the accuracy of the information they gather, so they check and double-check everything. Yet they are always wrong.

One factor, of course, is common to all spying. Men believe what they want to believe—the classic example is Jack Kennedy's belief in the CIA's assertion that the Cuban people were thoroughly anti-Castro and would rise up against him at the first small sign of outside support, such as a landing at the Bay of Pigs.

The more important factor is in the broadest sense political. No one, not even we Americans, has yet devised a method of gathering intelligence that can operate without the support of the people. The Battle of the Bulge could never have occurred in France, for example, because while Eisenhower's armies were operating in France his intelligence was superb. He always knew where the Germans were and what they were up to, for the simple reason that the Germans could not hide their movements from the people of France, and the vast majority of Frenchmen wanted the Allies to win. Thus they reported, accurately and truthfully, what they saw. When Ike's armies got to the German border, they lost this advantage, which allowed the Germans to mount a secret attack.

In a war zone, people give information to the side they want to win—that is, they make a political choice. Nothing provides quite so clear or conclusive an answer to the question—whose side is the ordinary Vietnamese on?—than the failure of our intelligence. Every time a Vietnamese peasant tells the truth to the Viet Cong or lies to the Americans, he is casting a vote—the only vote that counts. No intelligence service in the world can operate successfully in such a situation, not even

Don't Forget China

In one respect the Laos invasion differs decisively from the Cambodian invasion, and the difference makes it far more hazardous. Laos has a common border with Communist China. Thailand"s northern border is close to China—about 80 miles at the nearest point, or four minutes in a supersonic fighter. This geography had better be taken into account.

One may doubt that President Nixon is temperamentally able to acknowledge the risks of a U.S.-China confrontation. In 1954, when he was Vice President, he and Admiral Radford wanted to come to the aid of the French garrison trapped at Dienbienphu, reportedly with nuclear bombs if necessary. There is no sign that his judgment has improved.

Former U.S. Sen. Wayne Morse, one of America's most able analysts of foreign policy, said at a recent press conference in San Francisco that Mr. Nixon's Asian policies, if unchecked, will lead to an all-out war with China—a war in which the United States would probably stand alone. He pointed out that we do not have the manpower for such a war. Experience with non-nuclear bombing indicates that the air arm itself cannot conquer a small country like Laos, much less the giant China. According to Mr. Morse, it was the view of Robert S. McNamara, when he was Secretary of Defense, that not only aerial bombing on a vast scale but also 3 million foot soldiers would be needed to cope with China, even if nuclear weapons were brought to bear.

The Chinese, we know, are cautious. During the Korean War they remained aloof, but as General MacArthur approached the Yalu they sent repeated warnings through Indian diplomatic channels, and when these warnings were ignored they moved. Man for man, and with equal weapons, the Chinese foot soldier is at least as formidable as the American. Our people are superior technologically; from a purely military standpoint, one can only admire the agility with which the U.S. Army engineers and other units reactivated the base at Khesanh. But we had better not take on the Chinese.

The risk is that, without intending it, we may be dragged into such a situation as we abet the South Vietnamese militarists logistically and with air power in the forays into Laos. There are understandings, perhaps only nebulous at the moment, among the rightist generals of Cambodia, Laos, South Vietnam and Thailand. Thai troops are operating in Laos now, and if the Ho Chi Minh "trail" is shifted to the west the Thais may react in accordance with their interest which, together with their opposite numbers in the other countries of Indochina (with the exception of North Vietnam), is to batten on American aid. The United States has commitments in Thailand, the scope of which is known only in the top echelons of the Pentagon, the CIA and the Administration. The present American incursion into Laos appears to have been initiated by Thieu and CIA people who have long been operating in Laos. Repeated often enough, it may have results that are not envisoned under the Nixon doctrine.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

News Blackout End Anticipated

BY FRANK STARR
[Washington Bureau Chief]
[Chicago Tribune Press Service]

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3—The six-days news blackout on allied military operations in Southern Laos will be lifted "relatively soon," administration officials said today.

Meanwhile, the embargo was broadened to cover reports of a 10,000-man South Vietnamese drive into Cambodia supported by United States air power.

Asked if the embargo on war news covered the Cambodia report as well as Laos, Robert J. McCloskey, state department spokesman, replied, "No comment."

Security Is Reason

Asked if the department is using "no comment" in answer to questions on military operations in all of Indochina, McCloskey replied, "Yes." He explained that the reason was one of security of American and South Vietnamese troops.

While all administration spokesmen continued their refusal to discuss the war reports, Ronald Ziegler, White House press secretary, said that when the embargo is lifted, news of what has been happening in Indochina would come from correspondents in Southeast Asia.

At the Pentagon, the official spokesman, Jerry Friedheim, said the decision to lift the embargo would be made by Gen. Creighton Abrams, commander of U. S. forces in South Viet Nam, when in his judgment, troop security no longer is threatened.

No Idea of Drive

While wire service reports quoted the Saigon government as announcing a major Vietnamese drive against Cambodian sanctuaries, Laotian officials in Vientiane said they had no indication that the reported South Vietnamese drive into Laos had taken place.

McCloskey was asked if the Saigon government would release the news of the Indochina operations when the decision was made. He replied "that was not the plan," but added that his response did not mean that Vietnamese officials had broken the embargo in announcing the Cambodian drive.

As the blackout continued, doubt arose in Congress, despite repeated assurances by the Nixon administration, that congressional restrictions on introduction of American ground forces into Cambodia or Laos would not be violated.

Discussion Is Vowed

Thirteen liberal congressmen, all Democrats, said they will seek a three-hour discussion on the House floor tomorrow over "the urgency of the present situation in Southeast Asia and the need for getting all U. S. forces out as quickly as possible."

Sen. Robert C. Byrd [W. Va.], the Democratic whip, said there had been "inexcusable bungling" in the handling of information tending "to discredit what seems to me to be the successful carrying out of the President's Vietnamization program in South Viet Nam."

The majority leader, Sen. Mike Mansfield [Mont.], rejected protection for withdrawing American forces as a reason for new American involvement in Laos. He said that "we used to have one front [and] now we have two—maybe three."

Defends Blackout

The Republican national chairman, Robert J. Dole, defended the blackout, saying American troop security must be "the paramount consideration."

"I think it's another case that's being blown out of all proportion," Dole said. "Everyone fails to keep one basic fact in mind—that President Nixon is getting us out of Southeast Asia. So I just never get very excited about it."

Antiwar groups represented by the National Peace Action Coalition today announced plans for mass marches in Washington and San Francisco April 24 to protest the war in Indochina.

Peaceful and Orderly

Jerry Gordon, speaking for the N. P. A. C. at a press conference here, emphasized that the rallies would be peaceful and orderly, adding, "We leave all violence to Nixon."

This morning, a half dozen middle-aged women picketed the Executive Office Building adjacent to the White House with signs reading, "Tell The Truth," "End the Blackout, End the War." They said they had been denied a meeting with Herbert Klein, the President's director of communications.

There were indications that frustration over the news blackout was a matter of concern among administration officials.

McCloskey said today the embargo was possibly one of the subjects of a late and unannounced White House meeting yesterday between the President and his top advisers. Nixon spent 80 minutes with Richard Helms, director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird; State Secretary William P. Rogers; Adm. Thomas Moorer, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, and Henry Kissinger, Nixon's White House foreign affairs adviser.

The Indochina question was the subject of the conference, but a question as to whether any decisions were taken also received a "no comment" from Ziegler and McCloskey.

Ziegler said the process of troop withdrawal aimed at a level of 284,000 Americans in May is continuing.

Will Achieve Level

"That level, as announced by the President some time ago, will be achieved," Ziegler said. He recalled Nixon's remarks in California that he would have an announcement in mid-April on further troop withdrawals, and said that plan was unchanged.

"The President's objective from the very outset was not to widen the war, but to reduce U. S. involvement in Viet Nam and Southeast Asia," Ziegler said. "That is the policy and there is no change in it."

STATINTL

LOS ANGELES TIMES STAFF
4 FEB 1971

U.S. to Lift Veil on Indochina Moves

Disclosure May Indicate Critical Border Operations Have Ended

BY WARREN ROGERS
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — The news blackout on American operations along the critical border region in Indochina apparently will be lifted today or Friday—perhaps indicating the operation is over.

Nixon Administration officials would say Wednesday only that the disclosure would come "relatively soon." Reliable sources interpreted this to mean no later than Friday.

Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, the American commander in Vietnam, imposed the blackout Friday when he swore American reporters on the scene to indefinite silence. Fighting began then, it was understood, in the northwest corner of South Vietnam, at a point where Laos and North and South Vietnam come together.

Not Clear on Target

It was not clear, however, whether the principal target was North Vietnamese sanctuaries inside Laos or whether this operation was a feint—a diversion to distract the enemy while the main assault was made against similar sanctuaries in Cambodia, the same series of main-force bases swept by U.S. and South Vietnamese troops last spring.

This time, informants said, 25,000 South Vietnamese were massed at the border, with 9,000 Americans at their rear.

The U.S. troops were clearing and holding Route 9 and reactivating Khe Sanh as a forward base.

Route 9 is a main artery running from the South China Sea west through South Vietnam's I Corps (now the 1st military district) parallel to the demilitarized zone.

The route passes Khe Sanh—where 5,000 U.S. marines held off 40,000 North Vietnamese before abandoning it three years ago—and crosses into Laos to Sepone and beyond.

In Washington, spokesmen at the White House, State Department and Pentagon replied "no comment" to virtually every question. One point was made clear, however: no American ground troops would cross into either Laos or Cambodia, an action specifically prohibited by Congress.

Weather Hampers Bombers

Some bad weather — rain, fog, poor visibility—hampered American bombers and helicopters supporting the South Vietnamese forces, it was understood. But a chief reason for the long news blackout—already six days old, compared with only two days during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis—was that Abrams wanted to keep open his options, it was said.

When the Cambodian sanctuaries were struck last April, U.S. troops were the spearhead against North Vietnamese units already pulling out of their bases along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This time, the North Vietnamese were moving in—an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 in the last four months—and the whole job of attacking them was up to the South Vietnamese.

Abrams wanted to see how the clearing-out of I Corps went before committing the South Vietnamese, it was understood. Also, it could be speculated that, by kicking up a fuss and indicating his main thrust would be at the Laotian bases, he sought to drawn off enemy defenders from bases in Cambodia, his No. 1 target.

From Saigon Wednesday came reports that South Vietnamese troops, covered by U.S. aircraft, had begun a drive against Cambodian sanctuaries. South Vietnamese sources were quoted as saying it involved 10,000 of their troops. In Washington, officials had no comment.

One source indicated, however, that the size of the operation may be smaller than sources in Vietnam indicated — on the order of a large-scale, hit-and-run guerrilla raid. The idea seemed to be to go in, chop up the enemy and spoil his bases, and run for home.

The philosophy behind the incursion, it was reported, is the same as that of last spring's: as U.S. troops continue to withdraw from Vietnam, the enemy may be tempted to strike in force from Laotian or Cambodian sanctuaries strung along the South Vietnamese border. It is only prudent, therefore, to push them off balance with a pre-emptive attack, to knock them reeling so they are incapable of launching a meaningful offensive.

The timing is important, too. The Administration said the Cambodian operation in April-May-June bought six months of time, during which the enemy could launch no big assault. Six months have passed.

Nixon Meeting

President Nixon, who held an unscheduled meeting at the White House Tuesday night with top security aides, consulted throughout Wednesday with Henry A. Kissinger, his foreign policy adviser. Kissinger was at the Tuesday session, along with Secretary of State William P. Rogers, Defense Melvin R. Laird, Director Richard C. Helms of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Adm. Thomas M. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

On Capitol Hill, key members of Congress beat a tattoo of complaints against the news blackout, which left them as much in the dark as the rest of the public.

Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield of Montana was particularly indignant that what news there was was coming from foreign sources—Japan's Kyodo news agency and the Soviet Union's Tass and Izvestia. His Senate aide, Democratic Whip Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, added, "The enemy may know more about what we are doing that our own people know."

Others complaining about the mysterious operation included Democratic National Chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien, who decried what he called "blatant news censorship," and Chairman J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Sen. Frank Church (D-Ida.), Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Me.), and 12 liberal Democratic members of the House, who said they would talk for three hours on the floor today against the war.

Defense of the Administration came from Republican National Chairman Robert J. Dole, who said temporary censorship was worth saving American lives, and Senate Republican leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania.

The Soviet Union, through Tass and Izvestia, accused the United States of "armed intrusion in Laos" by "a considerable number of Saigon troops supported by U.S. armed forces." Again, in Washington, the reply was: "No comment."

WASHINGTON POST
4 FEB 1971
STAT INTL

U.S. Faces Credibility Challenge

By Murrey Marder
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Nixon administration was put on notice yesterday that it faces its most severe creditbility challenge over the extraordinary six-day Indochina news blackout that ended early this morning.

Administration officials had expressed hope that their military explanations will overcome the challenge in the wake of lifting the news embargo.

There is no certainty, however, that any military rationale will allay all the alarm and criticism aroused by one of the strangest episodes of the war.

For nearly a week the nation and the world were exposed to confusion and speculation about U.S. intentions throughout Indochina. While American newsmen in South Vietnam were muffled by the military embargo, the South Vietnamese press, the Polish delegation in Saigon, the world Communist press and the press of other nations were freely discussing U.S. "invasion" plans.

Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.), Assistant Democratic Leader in the Senate and a longtime supporter of U.S. policy in Vietnam, accused the administration yesterday of "inexcusable bungling."

Byrd charged the administration with creating "an entirely unnecessary credibility gap" that generates "confusion and disbelief."

He told the Senate he was well aware that military operations must be conducted in a way to deny information to the enemy. "But in this instance," said Byrd, "it seems likely that the enemy may know more about what we are doing than our own people know."

"It seems to me," said Byrd, "that there has been inexcusable bungling in the handling of information which normally should be given to concerned members of Congress and in the dissemination of news to the public."

Byrd protested that "it is being said that the most authoriative sources of information on the current situation in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are Izvestia, the Russian newspaper, and a Japanese news service. This is incredible."

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (Mont.) similarly told newsmen, "I dislike getting my information from the Russians, the French and the Japanese."

Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), commenting on the disclosure of the new South Vietnamese drive in Cambodia, protested that when Secretary of State William P. Rogers appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week "he gave us no clues as to the commencement of this kind of action." Muskie said the administration "is undermining its potential support in Congress—and seriously so."

In defense of the administration, Sen. Robert P. Griffin (Mich.), deputy Republican leader in the Senate, maintained that secrecy was required to protect the safety of U.S. troops. He appealed to Congress "to be a little patient."

At the Pentagon, spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim told protesting newsmen:

"If we at any point have to sacrifice immediate or instant credibility to protect the safety and security of troops, then the safety and security of troops will prevail."

Even administration officials in Washington conceded yesterday, however, that the news embargo had spread beyond their expectations—blacking out not only news concerning Laos and South Vietnam, but the Cambodian operation by South Vietnamese troops which was belatedly acknowledged yesterday.

The embargo also blacked out, at the time it was taking place, a White House strategy meeting on Indochina late Tuesday afternoon. Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said yesterday that participants included Rogers; Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird; Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Richard Helms, director of the Central Intelligence Agency; Henry A. Kissinger, presidential adviser on security affairs, and Ellsworth Bunker, U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam.

The President also met several times yesterday with Kissinger and other members of his staff, Ziegler said.

From the outset of the news embargo on the Indochina operations, many officials privately were troubled by it. They were concerned that it would create far more damage than security benefits, throwing into doubt the administration's overall intentions in Indochina. The request for the embargo was made by Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, U.S. commander in Saigon, officials said, and the administration concurred in the belief it could overcome any resulting damage to credibility.

The Nixon administration came to office pledging it would never fall into the credibility gap that plagued the Johnson administration and helped drive that administration out of office. Many officials of the present administration privately have said they recognize it is exposed to double sensitivities because of that recent history.